

Judge dogs by deeds, not breeds!



Breed-specific ordinances are short-sighted and ineffective because ...

1. Dog control problems are people problems and are not limited to a breed or mix. Singling out breeds of dogs as vicious or banning them outright merely shifts the responsibility from the dog owner (where it belongs) to the breed of dog and does not solve community dog problems.
2. Banning a breed or declaring it inherently vicious punishes those responsible dog owners who are the type of citizen that communities need to keep, not drive away.
3. Communities that have instituted such bans often find that the irresponsible owners and the criminals who use dogs for illegal purposes simply switch to another breed.
4. Banning a breed or particular mix of breeds punishes those dogs that are reliable community citizens, therapy dogs, assistance dogs for handicapped owners, search and rescue dogs, drug-sniffing dogs, police dogs, etc. and drives them out of the community. Some individual dogs have been corrupted by some ignorant breeders and owners, but the breeds themselves have a long and honorable history of serving man. To label all as vicious for the actions of a few ignores this history and the benefits of owning these dogs.
5. Breeds and mixes are often difficult to identify. The American Veterinary Medical Association and several state veterinary medical associations are on record as opposing breed-specific legislation for just this reason.
6. The "pit bull" is a type of dog bred for fighting, not a specific breed. Responsibly bred and owned, the American Staffordshire Terrier, Staffordshire Bull Terrier, American Bulldog, American Pit Bull Terrier, and their mixes are not fighting dogs, and their breed names are not synonymous with the descriptive term applied to fighting dogs.
7. Passage of laws that are enforced only on complaint create disrespect for the law if the authorities require compliance only upon complaint and provide ammunition for neighborhood feuds.

Instead of breed bans and restrictions, we urge communities to:

1. Vigorously enforce reasonable dangerous dog laws. Untrained and unsupervised dogs of any breed or mix can cause community problems. Those who allow dogs to run loose or to menace the neighbors should be dealt with according to a tough at-large or dangerous dog law. Anyone who deliberately trains a dog to menace others or who uses a dog in commission of a crime should be charged with an additional offense.
2. Develop education sessions that include safety information about dealing with dogs. Ohio Valley Dog Owners Inc. and area dog clubs can provide the expertise for these sessions.
3. Protect the rights of all citizens with nuisance ordinances such as anti-barking and pooper scooper regulations.
4. Teach children about responsible dog ownership and care. The American Kennel Club's free education program on dog care for elementary schools includes a video tape, teacher's guide, and worksheets and can be supplemented with demonstrations of obedience training, grooming, and talks on veterinary care by local training clubs or veterinarians.